



Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan Regional Constituent Workshop #9 Mid-Atlantic Region – Virginia Beach, Virginia July 26, 2004

The ninth and concluding workshop in the series of Recreational Fisheries Regional Constituent Workshops supporting the development of the new National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan for 2005-2009 was held in conference facilities at the Oceans East Tackle Shop, Virginia Beach, Virginia on July 26th for angler representatives in the mid-Atlantic Region. The series of regional workshops were designed to provide Recreational Fisheries constituents the opportunity to share their vision of an effective and successful Federal Recreational Fisheries Program, describe the characteristics and attributes of this Program, and discuss them in the context of a review of the draft NOAA Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan.

Jim Hayden of the Coastal Conservation Association of Virginia (CCA-VA) welcomed the workshop participants. He introduced Michael Kelly of the NOAA Office of Constituent Affairs, who shared his views on the positive impacts of the strong emerging partnership between NOAA and the recreational fishing community and described the progress made thus far in developing the new Strategic Plan. Following introductory comments by the workshop team, the attendees participated in a facilitated session designed to elicit ideas from each individual, share these ideas and prioritize them through small group interaction, and then jointly develop an affinity diagram representing a collection of the key attributes and characteristics of the group. The following diagram represents the product of this exercise. After a plenary review, the most recent draft of the Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan was introduced and the attendees were afforded the opportunity to comment on the contrasts and similarities between their group product and the draft Strategic Plan.

Results of Affinity Diagramming Process: Characteristics and Attributes of the Future Federal Recreational Fisheries Program

Organizational Structure	Allocation	Resources	Enforcement	Communications	Management Recommendations	Conservation	Data	Education
Fully Staffed Division for Recreational Fisheries; Staffed with Knowledgeable & Geographical Interests	Recreational and Commercial Interests Limited for the Best Effect on the Resource and Public Value (in that order)	Clearly Identify Funding Needs and Limits So That Local Organizations Can Lobby Legislators	Effective Law Enforcement – Stiffer Penalties, Sufficient Funding Support, and Enforcement Organization	Improved Communications -- Angler to Government; Agency to Agency	Improved and Effective Management of Inshore Fisheries (Menhaden)	Illegal to Posses Billfish	Reliable Collection of Catch Data (Inspire Public Confidence)	More Effective Use of Non-Governmental Organizations, Public Aquariums, etc. for Education of Recreational Fishermen
	Make Fishery Management Process Work in a Timely and Balanced Manner	Long Term Research and Funding For All Bluewater/Ocean Species	Increase Penalties on Commercial Violators (Repeat Offenders) -- Revoke Licenses	National VHF Channel for Fisheries Information (Or Future Communications)	Better Management of Latent Methods (Nets, Pots, etc.); Minimize Bycatch	Moratorium on New Kill Tournaments	Collect Data That Are Designed and Capable of Effective Fishery Mangement	Public (Youth) Education
	Remove Commercial Bias		Enforce International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Limits	Collect Public Input Regularly, Not Once in a While	Open EEZ for Stripers (If Stocks Support It) But Control Take of "Cows" (No Netters)	Prohibit Long-Liners	Provide Mechanism to Quantify and Identify Recreational Fishing Industry and Measure its Economic Impact -- Use In Management Allocation Process	
	More Responsive to Science/Technology Updates and Advances		Stricter Limits on Pelagics (Dolphin, Tuna, Marlin, etc.)	Better Information Flow Between Government and Users	A Plan for Highly Migratory Species That Sets Clear Recovery Times and Quotas; The Plan Must Also Manage International Catch	Prohibit Snag-Hooking	Reliable Fish Population Data	
					Work Toward Multi-Ecosystem Management and Include Habitat Protection	Mortality Reduction Research & Fishing Practices (Circle Hooks)	Standard National Recreational Fisheries Database	
					Eliminate or Exempt Recreational Angling From EEZ	Prohibit Culling		
					Equal Bluefin Quotas Along Entire U.S. Coast	Eliminate Wasteful and Ecologically Harmful Harvest Practices		
					NOAA Should Control All Menhaden Catches	Prohibit Import of Fish Not Allowed to be Caught in U.S. Waters		
						Eat More Chicken		

During the general discussion of the draft Strategic Plan that followed the affinity diagramming session, several comments were shared concerning the theme of enforcement and the NOAA role in enforcing regulations. There was general agreement that good regulatory guidance currently exists but that additional efforts were needed to enforce them on a consistent basis. It was pointed out that related objectives in the draft Strategic Plan emphasize best practices and self-regulation, and that there may be a need to include additional objectives that focus on deterrence. Recommendations by participants included ensuring sufficient numbers of trained personnel in the field, updating fines so that they are as punitive today as they were when first established, and widely publicizing arrests and convictions. Most of the attendees believed that State and local enforcement actions did not provide the level of deterrence provided by Federal enforcement due to the typically smaller penalty with less economic consequence to violators and the increased likelihood of cronyism between resident anglers and local authorities involved in adjudicating violations. The participants saw value in federally sponsored teams circulating between the coastal states conducting periodic, concentrated, high-volume boardings and inspections.

A specifically stated recommendation during the discussion for improving the Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan was to establish specific measures of success (i.e., metrics) for each of the objectives and include them as part of the Plan. It was felt that this would give constituents and the public in general a way to monitor the government's progress in satisfying its stated goals and objectives. The participants also believed that these metrics would assist NOAA Fisheries in defining appropriate levels of resources for specific objectives. During this discussion, a related recommendation was made for NOAA to consider establishing and maintaining a web-based, public Recreational Fisheries forum that would provide anglers the opportunity and a mechanism for continual feedback based on their perception of progress being made by NOAA toward its strategic goals. Most of the participants endorsed the idea of this web-based forum. Another comment was offered that some level of prioritization of objectives by NOAA is warranted, given the expectation that a finite level of funding will have to be spread across all of the fisheries implementation initiatives.

There was recognition by the group that several of the attributes developed by the attendees were specific implementation recommendations rather than strategic priorities. A commitment was made by the facilitators to the participants that they would ensure this information was also provided to NOAA for follow-on consideration during implementation planning. The concept of regional implementation teams was introduced to and positively received by the group, with the caveat that recreational fisheries constituents could participate in identifying the composition of the regional teams. The attendees felt that their greatest continuing assistance would be to communicate with local anglers, educating them on ongoing planning process and encouraging their involvement.

Richard Welton of CCA-VA provided closing observations and shared his opinion that the ongoing effort by NOAA Fisheries to engage recreational anglers and create a close partnership was unprecedented among his experiences. He expressed optimism that, through this new partnership, considerable progress could be made towards meeting the needs of the recreational fishing community. He praised OCS for the passion being brought to bear for improving the recreational fishing experience for all citizens through enthusiastic and proper management of fisheries resources.